# Annie Keenan's Hit

BY GILBERT P. COLEMAN.

'Why, what a charming ga-url-costume, all of which were supplied general paraphernalia. A messenger who had been dispatched to the resigay-url-ga-a-y-erl' Oh, rats!" ex- free of charge by the management.

"What's the matter, Ann?" asked Mrs. Keenan, from her comfortable chair near the little wood stove. "I just can't say it-I mean, I cahn't say it like Miss Ardavani does. She's our leading lady. She's got it down like them English; makes it sound kind o' high-salaried like."

"What you tryin' to say?"
"Why, goil; just goil. Here's the

claimed Annie Keenan, as she flung the manuscript petulantly on the bed fortune. It seemed as if her most ex-Annie could scarce believe her good and looked helplessly over at her travagant dreams had been crystalized into glorious reality. And, as she had expected, she found the work fascinat-

She was always early at rehear-Extra matinees served but to whet her appetite for more. Annie was ambitious and determined

to live up to that pretty little room at whose artistic embellishment plainly demanded a complete professional success. But it was slow, disaplines," she said, picking up the manu- pointing work, especially so as all the "Why, what a charming goil girls in the company were bent on that you are, to be sure!' and then she hus- identical object, though none so heartitles across the stage and lifts her ly and with such undiscouraged devoskoits. Say, maw, you ought to see th' tion. In one respect, at least, she was embroidery on that underskoit; it's in her element and fare the superior of simply great. She dresses to beat the the other girls in the chorus. For even in her girlhood days on the East Side "Well," said Mrs. Keenan, who, hav- she had been noted as the best dancer ing been born on the old sod, had con- in her block, and when the hurdy-gurtrived to preserve a pronunciation free dy men came around, crowds would from the infectious imperfections of gather to applaud her, pirouetting and the East Side, "why can't she say skipping about with all the grace and gur-r-l an' be done wit it? An' there's abandon of one who had been trained frame of unnatural, almost uncanny nothin' to this play actin' nohow, wit' to the ballet. A keen-eyed manager blackness, and with two flaps of gauze your photygraphs, an' your embroid-ered skirts, an' your comin' home late these indications of superiority; the resent her flying apparatus, stepped at night, an' your face all red as a hardening of the calf of the leg like a forward to the knot of men and, adherrin' wit' th' paint. Ye'd betther get boy's, the easy grace with which the dressing the perspiring stage manager, a job in th' stores an' be a dacent sales- knees were bent, the absence of those said in a hestating way: lady, an' stay at home at night wit' jerky motions so often noticed in the your mother." Whereupon Mrs. Keen- ordinary chorus; and, more than all, part. an, with whom her daughter's choice of that evident relish and zest for the mu- He paused abruptly as he was about a profession was a constant though not sic, the almost irresistible inclination to whirl around for another reckless

dence of Miss Dupree, stating the desperate nature of the case and urging her to come if it were by any means possible, had just returned. It was out of the question for the lady to leave her bed; the doctor had absolutely forbidden it.

A small. commiserating group stage hands had surrounded the manager and offered from time to time various sympathetic and impossible sug-

"Cut out her part, Abe," urged the carpenter.

"Cut it out! Cut it out!" he exlaimed irascibly as he pranced up and down, ducking a "drop" that suddenly descended from the flies. "You talk d- nonsense. How can I cut out the soubrette? You might as well cut out the lights and music.

It was at this crisis that Annie Keenan, arrayed to represent a gorgeous and totally impossible butterfly, with bare arms, legs incased in pink "strip" tights, her face covered with paint and resent her flying apparatus, stepped "Mr. Meyer, I think I can do the

altogether unpleasant grievance-for it to keep time to the rhythm, the swing- dash across the stage, and stared at afforded her unlimited opportunities ing of the head from side to side, and this unexpected apparition of human for objection and argument—withdrew the romping yet graceful carriage of butterfly in very evident astonishment, to attend to the washing.

terprising Italian brigands. The Jacket the rickety ledge, appeared in full view and with gentlemanly courtesy inquire and with gentlemanly courtesy inquire slashes and big black beads. In her It would not have been so bad, possi- of the lady bandit if she had been se-

parched, and in her eyes there was an the limelight for a moment dazed her climbed the steps behind the scenes knees. Reaching out blindly with both eading to the ledge on which she was hands for support, she lost her footing, to make her initial appearance. With and then, with a clatter and a crash, the keen observation that had come fell precipitately, from long experience he noted the ner- hideously down the full length of the ousness in her manner, and there was "practical" steps, and struck the stage espair in his attitude and remorse in with a thump.

his soul. And when at length the fate-

ridiculously fierce aspect. Wound about himself. Annie, standing high up on curious crowd of the chorus stared with terous chorus from the gallery were her head was a gaudy red turban of the top step behind the scenes, got her eyes wider open than ever. Steevens, like a stimulant, and set the blood the kind thought to be affected by en- cue, and, walking out unsteadily over after recovering from his first aston-

belt were thrust a murderous knife and bly, if the wings had not been so riously injured. a brace of old-fashioned duelling pis- crowded with the company, gazing at tols. The skirt, of yellow, black and her curiously, unsympethatically, ruth-thing happened. With her first misstep red, reached below the knees, and in lessly. She could not get the swarm Annie had instinctively thrown out her flash order to render the effect sufficiently of their staring, painted faces from be- arms, and thus securing a balance, had neongruous she wore, instead of boots, fore her eyes. They seemed to haunt fallen perpendicultrly to the stage, and repeated. a pair of dainty, low-cut dancing slip- her and to mock her, even as she ar- emphasizing each step of her descent pers. This fercoious lady bandit was rived at the middle of the parapet. The scheduled to appear at every performance, which had been warned of an elevated ledge of rocks at the change in the program, gave a few with customary perversity, readily as successful. It is true that her warned of with customary perversity, readily as successful. the rear, somewhat in the "Fra Dia- friendly handclaps of encouragement, suming that this was a novel acrobatic quavered somewhat, and her manner volo; fashion. A series of rustic steps and Steevens, the comedian, stood led from this ledge steeply down to the alone down on the stage waiting anxevel of the stage.

Never for a moment had Annie exshe saw and heard nothing. The feelsist when Annie, whose tumble served of her costume, and the still openpected to be troubled with stage fright, ing of vacuity inside her changed to partly to bring back her wandering mouthed wonder with which she She had, to be sure, heard of that dread giddiness and seemed to switch to her senses, looked about with wide-open veyed the house, and, above all, the disease, and had occasionally seen head. She arrived at the top of the mouth, her pert nose and ridiculous strangeness and totally unexpected presmall symptoms of it. The life that steps where she was to speak her first make-up giving her the appearance of cipitation of her "entrance," she had led on the East Side was not lines; but they would not come to her. anything but a dreadful bandit chief. an ingredient that sent the audience of the kind that tends to establish or And then she suddenly realized what Steevens' long experience had made into convulsions of laughter. Staid develop an inclination toward diffi-dence. But now, as the ininutes were in her life she was going to faint! Yes. public pulse, especially with that of the on and the time for her cue approached, strive as she would to break through she experienced a queer, unaccus- the awful cloud that was settling over tomed sinking in the pit of the stom- her senses, she could utter no sound. ch-her fingers grew cold at the ends. Her tongue was literally locked to the his breath: her tongue and lips became dry and top of her mouth. The cruel glare of unusual sparkle of excitement. Mr. and then seemed to go abruptly out Meyer, who had stationed himself in and to leave her in total darkness. Her ally beginning to dawn on Annie herwings, eyed her narrowly as she legs began to tremble miserably at the self

uncompromisingly

At this juneture, however, a strange

"Brace up. You've made a hit!" The unintentional hiatus passed unnoticed. For the situation was gradu-

These people were applauding her She had made them laugh! She-Annie Keenan, of the rear line of the chorus but it was a bigger hit than even

vas purposely intended to give her a ful moment came he swore softly to raved and swore like a madman, the plause and the laughter and the boisonce more stirring in her veins. She and with gentlemanly courtesy inquire held the house in a tumult before her. "Speak up!" again excitedly whispered Steevens; and he prompted:

'Well, here we are, my hearty!' The lines came back to her like

"Well, here we are, my hearty!" she

They were the first words Steevens' long experience had made into convulsions of laughter. Staid old playgoing public, and he grasped the program in vain for the name of this situation in an instant. Stepping quick- extraordinarily gifted young woman, ly to Annie's side he muttered under hitherto unknown, and the gallery, always appreciative of cleverly executed acrobatic "stunts," howled its ap-

proval. "You're all to the mustard," again whispered Steevens before going on with his lines, pending the subsidence

of the tempest in the audience. Meantime Meyer stood at the edge of the wings distracted by a spasm of -was getting "hands" by the hun- doubt. Were they, to use his favorite dreds. She had made a hit, accidental, expression, "jossing" her? Had she it is true—and it began to hurt a little "queered the show?" Had he made a tig fool of himself to send on this whol-Continued on Page 9.



suitable to one in the "profession." It Annie had not yet succeeded in advancwas four flights up—four very dark, ing herself to the favorable attention of carpetless, ill-smelling flights. The the manager. She was still a "back-don't want no buttin' in. I won't stand by Mr. Terrence Sullivan, truckman, week. But she was not discouraged. And he started to make his way for the stabling of his horses and dray. On the contrary, setting to work harder through the throng. But Annie knew tenement had established a sort of com- position, would have appeared hopelessmunistic washroom. But, however de- ly impossible. pressing the effect of the approach to bright and comfortable with lace curtains. On the right as you entered the room was Annie's "road" trunk, a huge cubic box, of the kind to be obtained at a bargain in the department stores, with her name stenciled in large black letters on either end, and "New York" underneath. Annie, it is true, had not yet been on the road, but she had purchased the trunk with her very first earnings in order to be prepared. All first-class artists, she had been in-

formed, were thus equipped. Between the two windows was the bureau, the first and last essential of any lady's boudoir. This was a small, unambitious piece of furniture, with a mirror that failed miserably to do justice to Anne's somewhat irregular but altogether piquant style of beauty. It was rendered formidably decorative, however, by being made the receptacle for a bewildering multitude of photographs, many of them pictures of her own pretty face, signed across the front with her "stage name" in an unsteady, angular hand, obviously aiming at the eccentric, theatrical effect: 'Faithfully yours, Dorothy Darrell."

It is not surprising that to a girl of Annie's exuberant fancy the stage should have made a strong appeal. A number of her acquaintances had already joined the vast and constantly growing ranks of the chorus, and their wonderful tales of the fascinating life behind the footlights had early settled in Annie's mind what her life work should be. She would join a "show;" she would work hard; and she would wear "gowns," and have her photographs in the magazines.

It happened, therefore, that one day shortly after arriving at the mature age of 17 she had, through the mediation of a former schoolgirl friend who had been a whole year in the business, been presented to the favorable notice of the manager of a musical comedy company-one of those productions that appeal to the eye, and in a less degree to the ear, but are not much concerned with the understanding. The manager had looked her over critically. Her face, with its half comical, partly turned-up nose, with its Irish gray-blue eyes and fair complexion, was very attractive, there could be no doubt of that. Her figure, though girlish, was well proportioned and entirely fit and proper for the exigencies of musical comedy costuming; she could hum a tune and was very fond of dancing. Huff. Thus, whereas the manager was in possession of a principal and an understudy for every part in the cast except one, for that particular part he had no one at all.

Fortunately for the smooth conduct of the performance, at least during the early stages. Annie was not to make had no one at all. for the chorus of the "Land of Non-sense" company at the munificent sal-ary of \$12 a week, with six changes of maze of ropes drops, properties and a female bandit gang, and the costume

feet wide by ten long, and was disposed crowded houses for more than two crowd circled about them curiously. in what was conceived to be a manner months, but in spite of all her efforts right half of the ground floor was used liner" and her salary was still \$12 a for no joshin'. I'm in no mood for it." in the night season, and on the left half than ever to make her way to the front her chance had come and was deterof the ground floor Mrs. Keenan and she had evolved a scheme which, to one mined to stick to her guns. the other housekeeping ladies of the of a less determined and buoyant dis-

In the "Land of Nonsense" company Annie's room may have been, the in- each leading character had an underterior afforded a striking and cheerful study. These substitutes were chosen contrast. There was a carpet, and the on account of an ability which had already been proved by the acceptable performance of some minor part. Anie was well aware that she had very little chance of being selected as the understudy of any particular character, yet it occurred to her, in one of the parts of all of the women princi- overlay her own pretty complexion. pals, and thus, as it were, became a second understudy for every female role in the cast, fortune would have a considerably larger opportunity of smiling

audience. the desired result, though never for a again and looked at the butterfly careminute did Annie waver. It chanced, fully. however, that one night, when the production was in the midst of a very successful run, Miss Flossie Dupree, the indisposed-a privilege peculiar to actresses and prima donnas when ordinary mortals are either sick or ill. It struggle. was therefore "up to" Miss Flossie's understudy, a young woman who rejoiced in the name of Venus Lemonde, to take the part. This particular young lady unfortunately for the peace of He could not comprehend how this mind of Abe Meyer, the stage mana-miracle of a chorus girl could come to fore to what she regarded as a highly a difficulty that threatened to wreck indecorous and humiliating "calling the performance to wreck the performance to wreck the performance that the section of the performance that the performance that the section of the performance that the performance th indecorous and humiliating "calling the performance. down," right in the presence of all the "Sure," repeate ladies and gentlemen of the chorus. She at rehearsals, and had further been position and prospects, as she declared almost invariable under the conditions),

These particulars eminently satisfied It was already 7:30 o'clock, the doors nearly half over, a circumstance that all the most exacting requirements, had been opened, the lights were up. enabled her, with the assistance of the and in short order, to her unutterable Mr. Meyer, a small, bald-headed gendelight, she had found herself engaged tleman, was fretting and swearing on into the costume usually occupied by

Annie's apartment was about six The play had been running to "What, you?" he said, while the

"Now look here,"

"Well, Mr. Meyer," she replied as calmly as her rapidly beating pulse would permit, "I've studied the lines, and I know 'em. I know the dances,

too-and the 'business.' He stopped and looked at her again incredulously, though he was visibly impressed by the bright light of truth that shone manifestly in her eyes. "You know the lines and the dances."

"Where'd you learn 'em? What'd you learn 'em for?" Annie felt herself reddening even un exuberant moods, that if she learned der her generous varnish of paint that "Oh, I just done it for fun," she said

n some embarrassment.

It was now nearing 8 o'clock. asbestos curtain had been raised. Every upon her. It seemed at first a formi- inch of room off the stage, in the wings, dable undertaking, but in reality was up in the wooden galleries, on the starnot. Constant presence at all the per- cases leading to the dressing rooms, in formances and close attention to the the large open space behind the back "lines," dances, music and "business" drop, was crowded with a heterosoon enabled her to become fairly fa- geneous mass of men and women, exmiliar with each of the four roles con- travagantly and fancifully costumed templated in her enterprise. In the and "made up," looking, when seen spare time at home she supplemented close by, like grotesque creatures from her work at the theatre and made her-self letter-perfect by copying out the lines and reciting them to her mother, of perplexity stepped to the peep-hole a critical and not altogether inspiring in the canvas curtain that still separated the audience from the stage and At first it did not seem that this gazed out into the front. The house method, arduous and somewhat des- was filling rapidly. The musicians were perate though it was, would accomplish already in their places. He turned

"Sure you can do it without breaking down? Got your nerve with you?"

It was not, perhaps, the best way of imparting assurance, but Annie, who have tame already within her grasp. down? Got your nerve with you?". company soubrette, had been suddenly imparting assurance, but Annie, who saw fame already within her grasp. was not the one to let slip without a

"Sure," she replied. "Do you know the cues?" asked Meyer, haunted by persisting doubts. The situation was quite beyond him. ger, had been subjected the week be- his relief at the eleventh hour and solve

"Sure," repeated Annie.
"How about the costumes?" he asked. had, in fact, been chidden for lateness glancing at her figure. "Guess you'll do, though. Well, hurry, get into your summarily fined two dollars. There-fore, being already disaffected with her nie started off joyously for the wings "if you get stuck in the dances just through her tears, and having a much take a few steps. Steevens will pull better "job" in view (a circumstance you through." Steevens, the chief comedian, was "doubled"

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